

EXHIBIT 6
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HB 115

January 30, 2009

House Taxation Committee
Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400
VIA E-MAIL AND FAX TO 406-444-4825

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Taxation Committee:

RE: PLEASE SUPPORT HB115 FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PUBLIC SAFETY

Spending hours on the road traveling across remote, isolated rural stretches of country is a fact of life for most Montanans. Fortunately, wireless phone technology has helped to combat the dangers of traveling in many such areas by providing a communications tool where none was available before. In the most rural areas of Montana, however, we have a long way to go toward making sure the public safety and other benefits of excellent wireless phone coverage are available everywhere in the State.

Mid-Rivers Wireless operates primarily as a "fill-in" licensee, meaning that we are granted wireless licenses by the Federal Government because **we are agreeing to provide coverage where NO wireless signal is currently available**. The overwhelming majority of our approximately 30 towers are located in places like Sand Springs, Van Norman, Sheep Mountain, Cohagen, Rock Springs, Ismay, Volborg, Plevna, Ekalaka, Ashland, Lambert, Richey, Alzada, and some of the state's other most remote rural areas. Unlike the nationwide wireless carriers, who have chosen not to build out in these areas for financial reasons, **Mid-Rivers does not have the option of "averaging" our costs for erecting and operating wireless towers across both urban and rural areas**. Every tower we build, including those few in towns and cities, is still in an area that would be considered "rural" by any Census definition.

HB115 recognizes the difficulties faced by rural wireless carriers in expanding coverage in areas where a \$350,000 tower may only serve 30 customers. It has always been difficult to make a business case for rural wireless coverage, but over the last several months the financial feasibility of building new towers has dwindled even further due to declining support, higher taxes and other increasing costs. Carriers like Mid-Rivers Wireless and Nemont are now tasked with meeting Public Service Commission build-out schedules that were based on a funding source that is no longer available at levels originally anticipated and under a tax policy that is a disincentive to building new wireless property. **Montana's rural wireless providers need support and incentives to build in areas where there is no good business plan, and HB115 provides those incentives.**

New wireless towers in unserved and under-served areas are the building blocks for Montana's future telecommunications infrastructure, providing the basis for the wireless broadband and other advanced services vital to our state's economic development. Montana's rural wireless carriers are doing everything we can to build out this critical infrastructure, but help is needed in the form of reasonable tax policy provided for in HB115. If you, your family or your business use a wireless phone in Montana, **please pass this bill to help us expand and improve your service and service in the rural areas you travel through**. We appreciate your consideration of this very important bill.

Sincerely,



Bill Wade
General Manager